

26th Judicial District SelfServe Center

ANSWER AND COUNTERCLAIM FOR CHILD CUSTODY

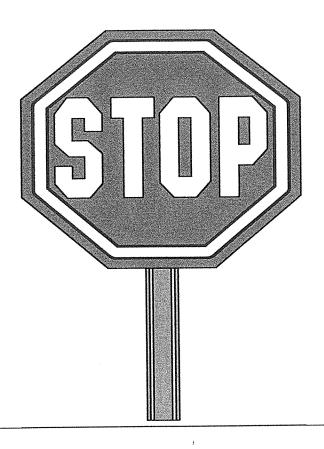
DUE TO THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE LAW, the forms and instructions contained in this packet may become outdated. You should review and research statutes and rules of procedure referenced in the instructions to ensure that the forms are accurate and current.

IN NO EVENT will the SelfServe Center Staff, Clerk of Court or anyone contributing to the production of these forms, instructions or guidelines be liable for any indirect or consequential damages resulting from use of the forms or information provided to you by the SelfServe Center.

IF THERE ARE ANY QUESTIONS in your mind concerning these forms, or your legal rights, it is strongly recommended that you consult with an attorney.

USE THESE FORMS AT YOUR OWN RISK. THESE FORMS MAY OR MAY NOT BE APPROPRIATE IN YOUR PARTICULAR CASE. ANY DESIRED OUTCOME FROM THE USE OF THESE FORMS CANNOT BE PREDICTED OR GUARANTEED. IT IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED THAT YOU SEEK LEGAL ADVICE!

THE FILING FEE IS:	



PLEASE CAREFULLY READ THE FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED IN THIS PACKET.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONSULT WITH AN ATTORNEY.

THESE ARE EDUCATIONAL FORMS DESIGNED TO ASSIST YOU, BUT YOU ARE REPRESENTING YOURSELF.
PLEASE REVIEW AND FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS TO IMPROVE YOUR PERFORMANCE IN YOUR CASE.
FAILURE TO READ AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS MAY ADVERSELY IMPACT YOUR CLAIM.

INTRODUCTION

What is this?

This packet of information is provided for individuals who wish to respond to a case without the assistance of an attorney. This is called a *pro se* or self represented case. If you are not sure that you want or need to go to court, please ask the SelfServe Center staff to direct you to phone numbers for lawyer referral services or the list of local attorneys willing to provide "unbundled services" (*willing to represent you for a limited portion of your case on an hourly fee basis*). Please note that this is a *process* that you will be going through. If things do not proceed as quickly as you hoped, please be patient. The goal is to provide the best and safest environment for the child. That is not a one step procedure.

How will it help me?

If you do not plan to use an attorney, this packet will guide you through the process by providing the forms and filing instructions that you will need. Since you are representing yourself, it is YOUR responsibility to ensure that these are the correct and current forms for the nature of your case. Therefore, you should review and research *applicable laws* and *rules of procedure* that apply to your type of case. If you are not able to do this, you should talk with an attorney. If at any point during the process you become confused or wish to proceed with the help of an attorney, contact the Mecklenburg County Bar Lawyer Referral Service (704) 375-0120 or the North Carolina Bar Lawyer Referral Service (800) 662-7660. The SelfServe Center also maintains a list of attorneys willing to provide "unbundled services."

What does this mean?

Certain legal terms will be found in italics throughout. A short definition of the terms will be contained in the text. A complete legal glossary is available for your convenience in the SelfServe Center. If you still do not understand the term, consult a legal dictionary or the SelfServe Center staff. You may also want to consult the North Carolina Rules of Court or www.nccourts.org to review the local rules for Mecklenburg County. Staff CANNOT provide legal advice but can provide procedural information and definitions of legal terminology.

What is an Answer and Counterclaim for Child Custody?

The packet available in the SelfServe Center allows a Defendant to respond to a Complaint for **permanent legal custody** of a child. These forms allow you to file a document telling the judge which parts of the Plaintiff's Complaint that you agree and disagree with, AND ALLEGE ANY FURTHER CLAIMS AGAINST THE PLAINTIFF. **YOU MUST FILE THESE DOCUMENTS WITHIN 30 DAYS OF BEING SERVED WITH THE PLAINTIFF'S COMPLAINT. THIS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!!**

Can or should I file an Answer and Counterclaim for Child Custody?

Please note that the SelfServe Center staff CANNOT provide legal advice. Therefore, we cannot tell you if you should file or what you should file, but if you have been served with a Complaint for Child Custody WITHIN THE LAST 30 DAYS and you would like to file a response telling the judge which parts of what the Plaintiff alleges that you agree and disagree with, as well as any other claims you would like to assert, this packet is for you.

What do I do first?

1. After you get your packet, READ THE INSTRUCTIONS! Then fill out the forms by printing neatly in black ink. You may fill them out at home or at the courthouse. Please read the forms carefully as some have a "Verification" page. This means that they must be signed in the presence of a Notary Public. If the document does require this, do not sign until you are in front of a Notary. They can be likely found at banks, law firms, and insurance agencies. A few may also be found in the Yellow Pages. Notaries often charge a small fee and require you to show a picture ID for their services. Be sure you have your documents already notarized when you take them to the Clerk's Office to file.

2. The SelfServe Center has a video available on filing for child custody. It is suggested that you

view it for procedural information.

3. After the forms are filled out and notarized, you must make <u>2 COPIES</u> (one for yourself, one

for the other party and the original for the file).

4. Please make sure that you have your CASE NUMBER on all of your documents. Take your completed forms and 2 copies to the Civil Filing Department (Clerk's Office) at 832 E. Fourth Street, Room 3725.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Your case involves complicated legal issues! This packet describes the general process, but it is impossible to cover everything that may affect your rights. If you get confused you should stop and seek advice from an attorney. The staff of the SelfServe Center, Clerk of Court, Judge, or the Trial Court Administrator's Office CANNOT GIVE YOU LEGAL ADVICE! PLEASE...if you are thinking of contacting an attorney, do so as soon as possible. Unless there is an emergency, try to contact an attorney at least 30 days before your hearing. Waiting could decrease your chances of obtaining representation.

STEP 1

Filling out the documents

ATTENTION: If it has already been 30 days since you were served with the Complaint, you have run out of time! Do NOT file these forms.

<u>ATTENTION:</u> For the purposes of these documents, **YOU are the DEFENDANT** and the **OTHER**PARTY is the PLAINTIFF.

CHECKLIST

You must complete the following documents:

- * Domestic Civil Action Cover Sheet: Fill this out and set it aside.
- ❖ Civil Summons: Fill this out and set it aside.
- * Answer and Counterclaim for Child Custody: Fill this out and set it aside.
- **Verification:** This must be completed in the presence of a Notary Public.
- * Certificate of Service: Fill this out and set it aside.
- * Affidavit of Service by Registered or Certified Mail: <u>Use only if you plan to serve by Certified or Registered mail.</u>

STEP'2

Photocopying Documents

Make two (2) copies of each document contained in your form packet. Copies can be made for a fee in the Civil Files Office, Room 3342.

STEP 3

Filing the documents

Take the original documents and 2 copies to the Civil Filing Department (Room 3725). MAKE SURE YOUR CASE NUMBER IS ON ALL OF YOUR DOCUMENTS.

STEP 4

Service of Process

North Carolina General Statues require that you give notice to the Plaintiff about the filing of your claim. This is known as "Service of Process." The correct way to serve the Plaintiff is determined by law. If the documents are not correctly served on the Plaintiff, the court will not hear your case.

ATTENTION: Complete the Certificate of Service before you serve the Plaintiff with the Answer and Counterclaim for Child Custody through 1st Class US Mail. The Certificate of Service is filed with the Civil Filing Department (832 E. Fourth St., Room 3725).

OR

Complete the Civil Summons if you want to serve the Plaintiff by Sheriff, Certified Mail, or Registered Mail.

For further clarification regarding service of process for written motions, see the North Carolina Rules of Court (State) Rule 4 for service by Sheriff or Certified Mail or Rule5 by Certificate of Service.

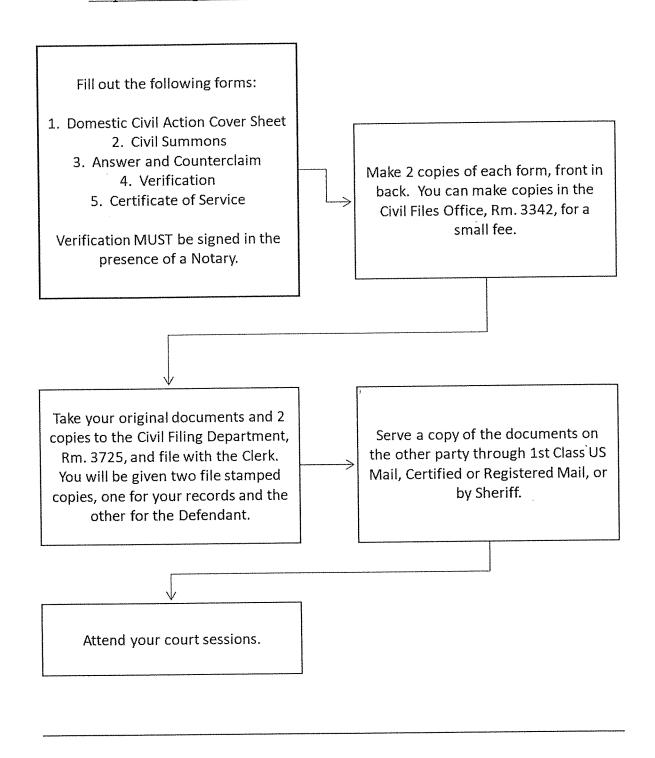
STEP 5 Attendance

Be sure to attend all scheduled court events on time and dress appropriately (as if you were going to a job interview). This is very important.

Lawyer Referral Services:

Mecklenburg County Bar Lawyer Referral Service: (704) 375-0120 or www.meckbar.org North Carolina Lawyer Referral Service: (800) 662-7660

Steps for filing An Answer and Counterclaim for Child Custody



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MEDIATION

Once a petition has been filed and the defendant has been served, the Family Court Office will send out a "Scheduling Notice". This notice will inform the parties of the Custody Mediation Orientation (CMO) date and Parenting Education (PE) deadline. Once all parties has completed the CMO, a mediation session will be scheduled. You will either 1. Receive an appointment the day of your scheduled CMO if all parties are present. 2. Receive a letter in the mail with the scheduled day and time.

WHAT IS MEDIATION?

North Carolina law requires that the parties to a custody law suit attend mediation before the case goes to a Judge. "Mediation" is a form of alternative dispute resolution where a neutral mediator helps the parties in a dispute agree on a resolution of their legal claims against each other. The parties involved in the custody lawsuit (the mother, father, grandparent or other legal guardian) meet together with a mediator. Only individuals named in the lawsuit can wait within the mediation suite. Each person is provided an opportunity to share their concerns with the mediator and the other side while discussing the child's custody and visitation plan. Topics discussed are:

- Physical custody—(where the children will live, visitation schedule for the weekends, holidays, summer and school breaks).
- Legal Custody -Major Decision Making for the child (non-emergency medical, educational, and religious).

Finances are <u>NOT</u> discussed in custody mediation including child support, who files for taxes, and who pays for health insurance for the child. The goal of mediation is to agree on a plan for custody and visitation that both parties can agree too.

WHO IS THE MEDIATOR?

The mediator is a neutral third party who helps assist parties in reaching a parenting agreement. They are Masters Level trained professional with several hours of mediation training. The mediator will not decide who is right or wrong nor force anyone to agree to anything. The mediator is appointed and paid by the Court.

WHERE IS THE MEDIATION HELD?

The mediation is held at the courthouse in suite 8510 (8th floor) or other location typically in the county where the lawsuit has been filed.

WILL ATTORNEYS BE THERE?

No. Attorneys are not allowed in the mediation session.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE REACH AN AGREEMENT?

The mediator will draft the custody and visitation agreement in writing and mail a copy of the draft to all parties for review. This agreement is called a "Parenting Agreement" (PA). Each party will sign and have the parenting agreement notarized and mail back to the mediation office or come in person and sign. In person signatures require a government issued ID. After the parties sign the parenting agreement, the Family Court Judge signs it, making it become a legal court order. You will receive the file stamped copy in the mail once the parenting agreement has become a court order.

WHAT IF ONE PARTY WANTS TO CHANGES THE PARENTING AGREEMENT BEFORE IT IS SIGNED?

If one party wants to make changes the parenting agreement <u>before</u> the parenting agreement is signed, he/she can contact the mediator. However, in order for any changes to be made <u>both</u> parties will have to agree to the proposed changes.

If either party is interested in changing the parenting agreement after it is signed by the parties and Judge, a motion must be filed. It is the responsibility of the party filing the motion to have the other party served with the modification. The parties are required to return to mediation to make an effort to resolve the matter prior to going before the courts. All parties named on the motion will receive a letter informing them of their scheduled mediation session date and time.

WHAT IF ONE SIDE VIOLATES THE PARENTING AGREEMENT?

The non-violating party can file a motion to have the violating party held in "contempt of court" for violating the order. The Court can punish the other side if the Agreement is violated; or the Court can modify the Agreement.

WHAT IF WE DO NOT REACH AN AGREEMENT AT MEDIATION?

Your case will be referred back to Family Court and placed on the calendar to be heard in court and decided by a Judge.

WHAT ARE BENEFITS OF REACHING AN AGREEMENT AT MEDIATION?

Mediation is usually quicker than going to court to get a decision. You can avoid the possibility of a Judge ruling against you. It is less of an emotional trauma than going to Court. You can save yourself and witnesses the time, inconvenience and embarrassment of testifying in court.

ARE THERE ANY EXCEPTIONS TO MEDIATION?

Except in approved situations, all custody cases go to mediation. A party has to petition the court to have a mediation waived. Until the "waiver" is <u>signed</u> by a Judge, mediation is <u>not</u> "waived". Mediation <u>MAY</u> be "waived" (not required) in these situations:

- One of the parties lives more than 100 miles from the Court
- The parties have agreed to private mediation (subject to approval from the Court)
- The other party has abused or neglected the child(ren) involved in the case
- The other party suffers from alcoholism or abuses drugs or abuses the parent who is filing the
- The other party suffers from severe psychological, psychiatric or emotional problems

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA	File No.
County	In The General Court Of Justice
County	District Court Division
Name And Address Of Plaintiff 1	
	DOMESTIC
	CIVIL ACTION COVER SHEET
Name And Address Of Plaintiff 2	
	☐ INITIAL FILING ☐ SUBSEQUENT FILING
	Rule 5(b), Rules of Practice For Superior and District Courts
VERSUS	Jury Demanded In Pleading? No Yes
Name Of Defendant 1	Name And Address Of Attorney Or Party, If Not Represented (complete for initial appearance or change of address)
·	appearance of onlings of dual very
Summons Submitted Yes No	Telephone No. Cellular Telephone No.
Name Of Defendant 2	receptions No.
	NC Attorney Bar No. Attorney E-Mail Address
	☐ Initial Appearance in Case ☐ Change of Address
Summons Submitted Yes No	Name Of Firm
Counsel for All Plaintiffs All Defendants Only (List party(ies) represented)	FAX No.
All Plaintiffs All Defendants Only (List party(ies) represented)	
TYPE OF PLEADING	CLAIMS FOR RELIEF
(check all that apply)	(check all that apply)
Amended Answer/Reply (AMND-Response)	Alimony (ALIM)
Amended Complaint (AMND)	Annulment (ANUL)
Answer/Reply (ANSW-Response)	Child Support (CSUP)
Complaint (COMP)	Custody (CUST)
Confession Of Judgment (CNFJ)	☐ Divorce (DIVR)
Contempt (CNTP)	Divorce From Bed And Board (DIVB)
☐ Continue (CNTN)	Domestic Violence (DOME)
Compel (CMPL)	Equitable Distribution (EQUD)
Counterclaim vs. (CTCL) Assess Counterclaim Costs	Medical Coverage (MEDC)
Extend Time For An Answer (MEOT-Response)	Paternity (PATR)
Modification Of Alimony (MALI)	Possession Of Personal Property (POPP)
☐ Modification Of Custody (MCUS)	Post Separation Support (PSSU)
☐ Modification Of Support in non-IV-D cases (MSUP)	Reimbursement For Public Assistance (RPPA)
☐ Modification Of Visitation (MVIS)	☐ Visitation (VIST)
Rule 12 Motion In Lieu Of Answer (MDLA)	Other: (specify and list separately)
Sanctions (SANC)	
Show Cause (SHOW)	
Transfer (TRFR)	
Vacate/Modify Judgment or Order (VCMD)	
Other (OTHR):	
Date	Signature Of Attorney/Party

NOTE: All filings in civil actions shall include as the first page of the filing a cover sheet summarizing the critical elements of the filing in a format prescribed by the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Clerk of Superior Court shall require a party to refile a filing which does not include the required cover sheet. For subsequent filings in civil actions, the filing party must include a Domestic (AOC-CV-750), Motions (AOC-CV-752), or Court Action (AOC-CV-753) cover sheet.

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA		File No.	
County			eral Court Of Justice Superior Court Division
Name Of Plaintiff			
Address		CIVIL SUMN	MONS MONS (ASSESS FEE)
City, State, Zip		D PLUKIES SUM	WONS (ASSESS FEE)
VERSUS			G.S. 1A-1, Rules 3 and 4
Name Of Defendant(s)	Date Original Summons Is	ssued	
	Date(s) Subsequent Sum	mons(es) Issued	
To Each Of The Defendant(s) Named Below:			
Name And Address Of Defendant 1	Name And Address Of De	efendant 2	
¡IMPORTANTE! ¡Se ha entablado un proceso ¡NO TIRE estos papeles! Tiene que contestar a más tardar en 30 días. acerca de su caso y, de ser necesario, habla documentos! A Civil Action Has Been Commenced Against You! You are notified to appear and answer the complaint of the plaintiff 1. Serve a copy of your written answer to the complaint upon the served. You may serve your answer by delivering a copy to the 2. File the original of the written answer with the Clerk of Superior If you fail to answer the complaint, the plaintiff will apply to the Cour	¡Puede querer con r con alguien que le as follows: plaintiff or plaintiff's atto plaintiff or by mailing it Court of the county na	esultar con un ak ea inglés y que p orney within thirty (t to the plaintiff's las amed above.	oogado lo antes posible bueda traducir estos 30) days after you have been st known address, and
Name And Address Of Plaintiff's Attorney (if none, Address Of Plaintiff)	Date Issued	Time	
	Signature		AMPM
	Signature		
	Deputy CSC	Assistant CSC	Clerk Of Superior Court
☐ ENDORSEMENT (ASSESS FEE)	Date Of Endorsement	Time	AMPM
This Summons was originally issued on the date indicated above and returned not served. At the request of the plaintiff,	Signature		
the time within which this Summons must be served is extended sixty (60) days.	Deputy CSC	Assistant CSC	Clerk Of Superior Court
NOTE TO PARTIES: Many counties have MANDATORY ARBITRATION	√ programs in which most	cases where the amo	ount in controversy is \$25,000 or

(Over)

so, what procedure is to be followed.

less are heard by an arbitrator before a trial. The parties will be notified if this case is assigned for mandatory arbitration, and, if

		RETURN O	F SERVICE	
I certify that this Summons and	d a copy of the complain	t were receive	d and served as follows:	
DEFENDANT 1				
Date Served	Time Served	АМ ПРМ	Name Of Defendant	
By delivering to the defend			ons and complaint. house or usual place of abode of the defendant named above with a	
person of suitable age and	discretion then residing	therein.		
below.			ring a copy of the summons and complaint to the person named	
Name And Address Of Person W	ith Whom Copies Left (if corpor	ration, give title of	person copies left with)	
Other manner of service (s	pecify)			
Defendant WAS NOT serv	ed for the following reas	on:		
The state of the s				
		pro_ pro pro # 1	DANTO	
Date Served	Time Served	DEFEN	DANT 2 Name Of Defendant	
		АМ ПРМ		
By delivering to the defend	dant named above a cop	y of the summ	ons and complaint.	
person of suitable age and	I discretion then residing	therein.	house or usual place of abode of the defendant named above with a	
As the defendant is a corp below.	oration, service was effe	cted by delive	ring a copy of the summons and complaint to the person named	
Name And Address Of Person W	Vith Whom Copies Left (if corpo	ration, give title of	person copies left with)	
Other manner of service (specify)				
	, ,,			
Defendant WAS NOT serv	red for the following reas	on:		
Service Fee Paid			Signature Of Deputy Sheriff Making Return	
\$ Date Received			Name Of Sheriff (type or print)	
Date Of Return			County Of Sheriff	

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA	IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE DISTRICT COURT DIVISION
COUNTY OF MECKLENBURG	()
Plaintiff,)	ANSWER AND COUNTERCLAIM TO
Defendant.)	COMPLAINT FOR CHILD CUSTODY
COMES NOW, Defendant,	alleging (Insert name)
and saying as follows:	(Insert name)
 Complaint that you agree with) Defendant denies the allegations Complaint that you do not agree with) After investigation, defendant la as to the truth or falsity of the ma you do not know to be true or false becomes 	contained in paragraph(s) (insert the paragraph number(s) from the of the Complaint. contained in paragraph(s) (insert the paragraph number(s) from the of the Complaint. cks sufficient knowledge and information to form an opinion atters alleged in paragraph(s) (insert the paragraph number(s) that ause you do not have enough information to say whether they are true or
denied with proof demanded at t	of the Complaint; the allegations are therefore rial.
	COUNTERCLAIM
I, the Defendant, for a Countercl	aim for custody against Plaintiff, alleges as follows:
1. That Plaintiff is a citizen and	resident of (insert county and state)
2. That Plaintiff has been a residual	dent of said county and state since
(insert length of residency)	·
3. That Defendant is a citizen a	nd resident of (insert county and state)
4. That Defendant has been a re	(insert county and state) esident of said county and state since
(insert length of residency)	

	ert relationship to child	 d(ren)]	
6. That the	e name(s) and date(s) of birth of the parties'	child(ren) is/are:
Nai - Nar	ne ne	; a/ · d/	o/b
Nar	ne	, d/ : d/	o/b
		g to bring the civil action child(ren)]	n is as follows:
	uring the past five y nildren have lived v		e child is less than five years old), t
Name of child		, d/o/b	, birthplace
PERIOD	ADDRESS	PERSON LIVED WITH	PRESENT ADDRESS
to present	Management of the state of the		
to		1	
to			· · ·
Name of child	, d/o	/b, birt	hplace
PERIOD	ADDRESS	PERSON LIVED WITH	PRESENT ADDRESS
to present			
to			
to			
(If there are more t	han two children, is	nsert additional sheets.)	
concern	ing the custody of	the minor child in (this)	vitness) (other capacity) in litigation (another) State, viz. city, name and address of court)

	10. That I (have) (do not have) information mentioned above pending in a Court of (If answer is affirmative, give details)	on of any custody proceeding concerning a child of this or any other State.
	11. That I (know) (do not know) of a pers	son who has physical custody of the child
	(Name) or claims to have custody or visitation	(Address) n rights with respect to the child, viz.:
	(Name)	(Address)
	aubicat matter jurisdiction (including	County has personal jurisdiction over the parties and jurisdiction under the Uniform Child Custody (s) and render a custody determination in this action.
	13. Venue of this action is proper in Med	cklenburg County, North Carolina.
	<u>CUSTODY C</u>	COUNTERCLAIM
	14. Defendant is a fit and proper person child/children and an award of custo aforesaid minor child/children.	to have primary custody of the aforesaid minor dy would best promote the interests and welfare of the
	PRA	YER FOR RELIEF
WHEF	REFORE, defendant prays the Court for r	elief as follows:
1.	That custody of the minor child/ch	nildren be awarded to Defendant.
2.	That Plaintiff be taxed with the co	sts of this action.
3.		such other and further relief as the court may deem just
This _	day of, 20)
		(Signature of Defendant)
		(Address and phone number of Defendant)

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)	VERIFICATION
COUNTY OF MECKLENBURG)	
I,	, being first duly sworn, deposes and
(Defendant insert your name he says that he/she is the Defendant in this	ere) s matter, that he/she has read and understood this
ANSWER AND COUNTERCLAIM	and knows the contents to be true of his/her own personal
knowledge, except for those matters an	nd things set forth upon information and belief, and as to those
matters and things, he/she believes the	m to be true.
_	(Sign in the Presence of the Notary Public)
Sworn to and subscribed before me thi	s day of
	·
<u></u>	Notary Public
My commission expires:	•

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

s the day of <i>(date)</i>	(month)	, (year)		
(00000)	(******			

STATE OF I	NORTH CAROLINA	File No.			
	County	In The General Court Of Justice District Superior Court Division			
Name Of Plaintiff(s)		AFFIDAVIT OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY			
	VERSUS	REGISTERED MAIL CERTIFIED MAIL			
Name Of Defendant		DESIGNATED MAIL DESIGNATED DELIVERY SERVICE G.S. 1-75.10(a)(5), (a)(6); 1A-1, Rule 4(
I, the undersigned,	did mail by registered mail (return receipt re	equested), certified mail (return receipt requested),			
a copy of the summ		(list)			
,	ned action to (name of person to be served)				
received by the defe	•	ove listed other document(s) (check, if applicable) were in fact, as evidenced by the attached original receipt. this affidavit.)			
SWORN/AFFIRM	ED AND SUBSCRIBED TO BEFORE ME	Signature Of Plaintiff/Attorney			
Date	Signature Of Person Authorized To Administer Oaths	Name (type or print)			
Title Of Person Authorized	I To Administer Oaths	}			
Notary	Date My Commission Expires				
SEAL	County Where Notarized				